

FAIRFAX COUNTY

POLICE DEPARTMENT

TEST TAKING WORKSHOP

The Fairfax County Police Department is interested in hiring only the most highly qualified applicants for the position of Police Officer. The written test is the first step in this highly competitive process. The written test used by the department was developed by the International Personnel Management Association and was approved for use only after extensive validation studies were conducted and the test was deemed to be fair and appropriate. As in all testing situations, some candidates perform better than others. Occasionally, candidates who have achieved academic success or who have experience in law enforcement fail the written test. Failure of the written test disqualifies the candidate from further processing. Candidates who are otherwise highly qualified, and meet all other criteria, have been lost because they did not pass the written test.

The purpose of this on line workshop is to decrease the likelihood of your not performing at a level consistent with your ability. If you have fundamental reading deficits, poor recall ability, and/or weak analytical skills, this workshop will not help you to pass the written test. After reviewing these on-line exercises, take a hard look at yourself, and ask yourself if you are ready to test.

There has been extensive research conducted into the possible causes of test failure among capable applicants. It is likely that a number of factors influence how well an individual performs on a test. In this workshop, we will focus on areas the research shows may improve test performance in capable test candidates. We will review:

1. Preparing to take the written test

2. Test Anxiety

3. Test Wiseness

4. Taking the Test

PREPARING FOR THE TEST:

1. Become familiar with the format of the test:

In this section, you will learn about how the test is laid out, and the types of questions you may encounter. The test is multiple choice and you will be asked to select the **most** correct of three to five possible responses to each question. You will record your answers on a separate piece of paper and will not be permitted to write in or on the test booklet. The test contains one hundred questions. The first 48 questions will be answered after you have read a study guide for twenty-five minutes. The first 48 questions of the test will measure your level of reading comprehension and your ability to recall information. You will be provided with scratch paper to take notes as

you read, however, ALL materials, including the notes you have taken, will be collected before you begin answering questions.

The second part of the test (52 questions) will measure your proficiency in

- law enforcement terminology
- basic arithmetic computation
- short term memory recall
- basic problem solving

You will be provided with ALL of the materials necessary to complete the test. You are given one hour and forty-five minutes to answer the one hundred questions on the test. Your test score will be based on the number of correct responses. **THERE IS NO PENALTY FOR GUESSING.** If you leave an answer blank, you will receive no credit. If you take your best guess, you have a 25% chance of receiving credit. If possible, answer every question on the test. In most cases, one hour and forty-five minutes is more than ample time to answer every question.

TEST ANXIETY:

Now that you know what you will be tested on, and how the test is laid out, there is nothing to be nervous about, right? Unfortunately, it's never that easy. We are all human beings, and it is quite normal to become anxious when faced with a competitive examination that will determine whether you are able to pursue your vocational goal of becoming a Fairfax County Police Officer. Test anxiety is best defined as a general feeling of tension, uneasiness or lack of confidence. Excessive anxiety can have a detrimental effect on how you perform on the written test. Our purpose here is not to tell you that you will get the highest score on the test, but rather to help you to develop methods for reducing test anxiety, allowing you to concentrate on the test and perform at your maximum level of proficiency. Here are some strategies that may help:

-READ: Dedicate a specific amount of time every day to reading. Read about police work or anything else that interests you. If you have not attended a formal class in a while or are not an avid reader, this will help you to gain confidence in your ability to read and understand.

-PRACTICE: Have a friend, spouse or relative read a short story or article and formulate questions about the reading. The piece should take approximately one half an hour to read. Read the same piece, and attempt to answer the questions. If you prefer to work by yourself, read often, and practice taking pertinent notes and rewriting the story after having read it. There are innumerable study guides for civil service exams available at most of the major book stores and libraries. Although they may not be at all similar to our test, you should be able to find a great deal which measure reading comprehension.

-LEARN: as much as you can about the Fairfax County Police Department. Contact a recruiter or visit their on line web page. The more familiar you become with what a police officer does, the more confidence and dedication you will have in pursuing your goal of becoming a member.

<http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ps/police/employment.htm>

-RELAX: Learning how to relax will benefit you in every facet of life, and most certainly in taking the police test. There are hundreds of books and tapes dedicated to relaxation techniques. Effective techniques include:

Take a few deep breaths

Visualizing success

Meditation

Positive Thinking

Check your pulse while relaxing. Feel it decrease as you put it all together

Find one that works for you. Don't be your own worst enemy!

TEST WISENESS:

Test wiseness is defined as a subject's capacity to utilize the characteristics and formats of a test or test-taking situation to maximize their potential for success. It means having a plan when you enter the room and sit for the test. There are four areas of focus that will help you in any test taking situation. If you develop a plan for each, you will greatly improve your chances for success on the police officer test. The areas of focus are:

1. Use of Time:

This is a timed test. You should understand that when the time is up, you will not be permitted to continue working. Pace yourself. Be aware of the clock without becoming obsessed by it. You have plenty of time to answer every question. Don't become fixated on a particular question. If you are stumped, either make your best guess, or return to the question when you have completed the rest of the test. Try not to leave any questions unanswered. You will get no credit for unanswered questions, but may receive credit if you attempt a guess. Use all of the time you are given to read, reread, and reread again the study guide. Half of the questions on the test are in that booklet! Twenty five minutes is more than adequate time to read the study guide. If you finish in less time, don't put it aside and start watching the clock. Reread it!

2. Avoid Errors:

The best way to avoid errors is to listen carefully to the directions you are given by the test administrator. You will be taken step by step through every stage of testing. Errors occur when people try to get ahead of the administrator, or fail to follow the directions they are given. You must also carefully read the directions provided in the test booklets. Take time to review the sample questions. Regularly check to make sure you are marking your response in the correct space on the answer sheet. Making errors slows down the process for everyone, breaks concentration, and adds to one's anxiety level. Listen, read, and understand all directions before

proceeding. If you do not understand the directions you have heard or read, raise your hand and a test administrator will come over and assist you. Be clear and be calm and you'll avoid making errors.

3. Strategies for Guessing:

The best plan is to know going in that you are not going to leave any answers blank. There are several theories on making your best guess at test time. A good beginning is eliminating those responses you know to be incorrect. By narrowing down the field of possible responses, you obviously increase the likelihood you will guess correctly. Avoid making random or "eyes closed" guesses. Read every answer before deciding. Often, people who take multiple choice tests see an answer they believe to be correct and select it without reading the other possible responses. This often results in a wrong answer. Read every response before selecting an answer. Sometimes all it takes is a more thoughtful reread of the question to eliminate a response. If you are able to eliminate one or more responses, you have made a good guess. It is generally wise to stick with your first inclination when making a guess. Avoid making assumptions that are not stated in the questions. At times it is clear that one or more answers do not fit. Other times, you must eliminate incorrect responses through deductive reasoning.

4. Deductive Reasoning:

If a statement is phrased in such a way that its truth is contingent upon a proper response, incorrect answers can be eliminated through deductive reasoning. The relationship between the statement and the answer is, in simple terms, an if-then relationship. When reading a short passage, look for information given that is dependant upon other information to be a true statement. Here is an example of deductive reasoning:

The Public Safety Academy trains recruits in all areas critical to effective police work.

Competency in accident investigation is critical to effective police work.

Therefore, through deductive reasoning, you can be certain that recruits are trained in accident investigation at the Public Safety Academy.

Deductive reasoning takes some of the guess work out of guessing. If you are able to eliminate answers through deductive reasoning, you will arrive at the only possible answer. It can be a confusing process, but if you read carefully, relax, and review all of the possible responses, you should achieve a measure of success. Learning to recognize conditional relationships in statements is what deductive reasoning is all about.

TAKING THE TEST:

Here are some things to consider for the day of the test:

Try to get a good night's sleep.

If you are ill, or have experienced a recent traumatic event, call and reschedule

Practice your relaxation techniques.

Eat a healthy meal, low in saturated fats and sugars.

Allow plenty of time to dress and travel to the test site.

Don't rush- Arrive at least 20 minutes early. Remember, you should allow time for traffic, parking and finding your way to the testing room. Proper time management is important before as well as during the test. Give yourself the time you need. Don't rush!

When you arrive, find a seat, relax and acquaint yourself with the room.

Concentrate on your task. Don't give in to distraction.

Work quickly and accurately.

Listen to and follow directions.

Raise your hand if you are confused along the way.

RELAX:

This is where you put it all together. You've learned about the test. You've practiced reading and relaxation techniques. You've developed a strategy. You are psyched and ready. Your confidence level is high, and your anxiety level is low. All that is left is to do your best, secure in the knowledge that you are prepared.

By now you should be ready for some practical exercises. Relax, do your best, and assess your potential for success. The following are examples of what you might encounter on the test:

I. Read the following passage and answer the four questions that follow. The questions will be based on the information contained in, “Classifying crimes.” You may take notes as you read, but discard the notes prior to answering the questions. Attempt to complete this exercise within 8 minutes.

CLASSIFYING CRIMES :

There are several different ways in which crimes are classified. It is important to be able to distinguish between the major categories. Crimes against persons are illegal acts in which a person(s) inflicts harm to another person(s) through intimidation, the threat of harm or any act of violence. In these cases, the target of the criminal act is referred to as a “victim.” Crimes against persons vary in their degree of seriousness. Curse and abuse, robbery, telephone threats and assault are examples of crimes against persons. A crime not against a person, or “victimless” crime, occurs when a nonviolent criminal act is committed. Generally, these are criminal acts which are not directed at a particular individual with the intent of causing physical harm. Burglary, larceny, uttering a bad check and destruction of property are some examples of crimes against property. They are investigated as either felonies or misdemeanor crimes. In most cases, the use of a weapon in the commission of a crime against a person will automatically warrant a felony arrest, or felony case investigation.

There are crimes against persons which are investigated as misdemeanors as well. In these cases, the victim is not seriously or permanently injured by the crime. Penalties for felony offenses are more substantial than for misdemeanor offenses. In the state of Virginia, a felony conviction carries a minimum of one year in jail. A misdemeanor conviction carries a maximum penalty of one year in jail. In most cases, the presiding Judge has the discretion to suspend all or part of the sentence, or even reclassify the nature of the offense. They rely on the recommendation of jurors, pre-sentencing reports and the criminal history of the accused when

deciding on the imposition of a sentence. Calls for service are initially received and classified at the Public Safety Communications Center.

The Fairfax County Public Safety Communications Center receives more than one million telephone calls per year. These calls are prioritized and dispatched by the seriousness of their nature. The call taker assesses the information provided by the caller, and if it is determined a crime has been committed, a call for service is initiated and the crime which is believed to have occurred is classified by the dispatcher. The responding officer plans his response based on the information provided. The officer may request more information from the dispatcher, a backup unit, or that a supervisor respond to the scene as well. As the initial responding officer, it is his or her responsibility to accurately assess and classify the crime, if in fact a crime has occurred. In all cases where a crime has occurred, the initial responding officer must write a report detailing the facts and circumstances, including any suspect or arrest data, and either forward the case to a detective for further investigation or assume the responsibility for properly closing out the case. What is evident is that the classification of an event can change many times from the time it is received until the time the case is disposed of by the court.

THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ARE BASED ON THE PASSAGE YOU JUST READ:

In answering the following questions, you are to mark your answers on a separate sheet. Do this by blackening the circle on the answer sheet which corresponds to the answer you think is best. If you want to change an answer, first erase completely the space you have blackened. Your score will reflect the number of correctly answered questions. No points are taken away for wrong answers OR FOR GUESSING.

SAMPLE QUESTION:

A pre-sentencing report is used by a judge when considering:

- A. The number of jurors in the courtroom
- B. The imposition of sentence
- C. Guilt or innocence
- D. Jurisdiction of the offense

Items on Answer Sheet:

	A	B	C	D
1.	0	0	0	0

The correct response is B. On the actual test, you would be correct if you darkened the circle under the letter B. This is the way the answer sheet on the actual test will appear.

Questions 1-4 tests your ability to recall what you have read.

1. A felony conviction carries a penalty of:

- A. A minimum of one year in jail
- B. Not more than one year in jail
- C. A minimum of five years in jail
- D. Jail time only if there is a victim

	A	B	C	D
1.	0	0	0	0

2. The Public Safety Communications Center is:

- A. Responsible for the storage of evidence
- B. Where calls for service are received and initially classified
- C. Expected to handle up to ten thousand calls per year
- D. Not responsible for dispatching fire and rescue calls

A B C D

2. 0 0 0 0

3. In all cases in which a crime has occurred, the initial responding officer is responsible for:

- A. Assessing the situation, drawing a diagram, writing a report
- B. Assessing the situation, Requesting a detective, storing evidence, setting court dates
- C. Assessing the situation, accurately classifying the crime, writing a detailed report
- D. Assessing the situation, drawing a service weapon, handcuffing the complainant

A B C D

3. 0 0 0 0

4. A crime in which there is a victim is always:

- A. A felony case
- B. A misdemeanor case
- C. Either a felony or a misdemeanor case
- D. A crime against property

A B C D

4. 0 0 0 0

The test used by the Fairfax County Police Department is designed to measure areas other than reading comprehension as well. You will be asked questions which test your vocabulary, basic arithmetic computation skills and problem solving abilities. The following are sample questions similar to those you may encounter in the examination for Police Officer:

5. Circle the answer which you believe to be the most correct response to the following true statement:

If the average male child watches more than four hours of television per day, then either his power of imagination is improved or he becomes conditioned to expect constant excitement. The average male child's power of imagination is not improved by watching television. The average male child watches television for five hours a day.

- A. Average male children are bored when watching television
- B. Average male children expect constant excitement
- C. Average male children lose their power of imagination by watching television
- D. Average male children do not enjoy reading

6. You are the first officer on the scene of an escaped prisoner case. An inmate from the Lorton Correctional Facility has not been seen in two hours. The only photograph available is more than 10 years old. Which of the following would aid MOST in capturing the suspect?

Circle the correct response

- A. The suspect has dark eyes and a medium build.
- B. The suspect hangs around pool halls
- C. The suspect has a tattoo on his shoulder and may be wearing an ear-ring
- D. The suspect is six foot six inches tall, and walks with a limp.

7. You are pursuing a suspect vehicle EAST on Main Street and turn right onto Maple Avenue. After going six blocks, the suspect makes a U-turn and heads in the opposite direction on Maple Avenue. The suspect then turns left onto Bleeker Street, and then makes another left onto State Street. The suspect then turns right onto Elm Street where he loses control of the vehicle, crashes, and is apprehended. In which direction was the suspect traveling on Elm Street?

Circle the correct response:

- A. North
- B. East
- C. South
- D. West

8. Circle the correct response to the following scenario:

While on routine patrol, you observe a man who appears to be in his sixties asleep in a vehicle parked at a shopping mall. You should:

- A. Leave him alone
- B. Give him a sobriety test
- C. Make sure he is not sick or injured
- D. Ask him to leave the parking lot

This concludes the practice questions. The correct answers are found on the following page.

How well did you do? If you did well on this pre-test, you will do very well when you take the police officer exam. Take the information and put it to use. Come to the test prepared, and you **WILL** be able to do your best. If you have discovered that perhaps you are not ready to test, I hope this workshop has helped you to identify the areas in which you need work, and that you will return when you have acquired the skills necessary to do well. Good luck to you in all of your endeavors, and we'll see you again on test day.

KEY:

1. A

2. B

3. C

4. C

5. B

6. D

7. D

8. C